

## Hymenaeus Alpha: An Oral History

**W**HAT FOLLOWS is the first of several installments of an autobiographical interview with the late Caliph Hymenaeus Alpha, conducted by his close friend Soror Lola DeWolfe of the O.T.O. Board of Directors. Further installments will appear in future issues.—A.V.

**Lola De Wolfe:** This is going to be the hagiography of Grady L. McMurtry, the Caliph of the O.T.O. and this is going to be the history of his childhood, his meeting with Crowley, and what's come through the O.T.O. since that time.

**Hymenaeus Alpha:** Thank you, Lola. I was born on October 18, 1918, the last month of World War I. As to whether or not I was an active participant in World War I is a matter of speculation, I have certain memories, but I wouldn't count on it. In any case, at the present time, I'm 62 years old and have gone through several incarnations in one lifetime. For example, one incarnation was that of knowing Aleister Crowley personally. In 1943 the only way of getting to England was on a troop ship. I happened to be a first-lieutenant in the United States Army at that time, first-lieutenant subordinate and I went to England so that I could participate in the invasion of Normandy and meet Crowley...it was all very Karmic. In any case, that's one career. I've had a career as a college professor, for example. Teaching political theory and American government at the University of California here in Berkeley and at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. I've had a career as a management analyst with the federal government and the state government in which I would learn how to take organizations apart and put them back together again. And many other things in the sixty years you've lived. Now, in terms of biography, where are we? Well, basically what it comes down to is this, my last name, McMurtry, when first translated from the Scottish-Gaelic means "Son of the Sea Wind." That is to

say, a Viking...in other words, there's a little chicken-crack north of the Clyde River in Scotland, where obviously a dragon-ship came in and beached and the local natives called the guys who were on it exactly what they were... "Sons of the Sea Wind," or the Vikings who happened to get stranded there.

So in the course of events, these people would wind up being the Scottish-Irish immigrants from Scotland and then Northern Ireland and the Carolinas in the colonial days. And from this I would take my ancestry to be Scots, Irish and Cherokee Indian, because the Scots-Irish and the Cherokee Indians intermarried and at one time, there was quite a flourishing civilization of Scots-Irish and Cherokee in the former Confederate states, and that's how I got born, see? Because after the Confederacy lost the war between the States, my family decided to take an ox train from where they were down South to the Oregon Territory by the Oregon Trail. And in crossing the Mississippi, the older people caught malaria from the mosquitoes, but being good Scot-Irish religious stock, they lasted all the way to Missouri-Arkansas-Oklahoma border before they died. They left two small sons, George and Joe. George happened to be my grandfather. And a local pioneer family took them in and raised them, but they didn't change their name, so we know that much. We don't know about the family history in terms of dates or births because every time the family cabin was burned, of course, the bible was burned too, and that's where you kept the dates of births, in the bible. But we do know, in general, the history of the family.

*To be continued*



# Hymenaeus Alpha An Oral History

(Part Two)

*Do what thou wilt  
shall be the whole of the Law.*

**H**ERE IS the second installment of the autobiographical interview with the late Caliph Hymenaeus Alpha conducted by his close friend Soror Lola DeWolfe.

On the first anniversary of H.A.'s death, July 12, 1986 EV, some thirty-odd O.T.O. members and friends boarded a boat, sailed to the waters off San Francisco, and distributed Grady's ashes at sea—such was his oft-stated will. The event was organized by Sister Lola, Rusty Sporer and GTG Bill Heidrick. By all reports it was a celebratory and emotional affair, fitting for a great Thelemite who lived long and desired death much.

The following day many Bay Area Thelemites gathered at Thelema Lodge for a banana split party in honor of the late Caliph's well-known predisposition for such mood-altering substances. In remembrance, we also reproduce one of Grady's poems (the recitation is also from the interview tape) as a preface to the interview proper.—H.B.

## Hymenaeus Alpha:

*Oh sweet adulterous harlot of the skies  
I yearn to thee with heart of burning fire  
Pray that I might lie between thy thighs  
To find one mad all-consuming quire  
The passion promised in thy tender eyes.  
That I might find, o sweet incestuous one  
The flame uniting heart to soul and mind  
And having found this love of two and none  
Cast off the shell that maketh mankind  
blind*

*Unto the glory of the dawning sun.  
And having found my rapture in thy kiss  
O daughter of the evening's purple charms  
To know the beauty, and the carnal bliss  
Of total dissolution in thine arms  
My Babalon, veiled by the dread abyss.*

And then I penned a few sentences, the first two sentences come right out of "The City Of Dreadful Night" which Crowley thought was the greatest poem of the nineteenth century... the rest of it I added and he didn't like it, but anyway...

*O melancholy brothers  
Dark—dark—dark  
Death is the way of thy birth,  
Pain is the curse of thy mirth,  
Sweet is the kiss of the earth.*



**Grady Louis McMurtry  
Caliph Hymenaeus Alpha X°  
An xiv—IIIxv**

**HA:** (Continued...) I got acquainted with a bunch of Chicano kids in Selma, and it turned out that they were involved with the Selma High School band. And it also turned out that there was a guy in Pasadena by the name of Aubrey Strong. And he happened to be dean of men at Pasadena Junior College. He also happened to be the bandmaster for the Tournament of Roses band. Which of course was the Pasadena Junior College band during the year. And on New Year's day, it was the Tournament of Roses Band.

Therefore, he had incentive to take certain high schools in California...the ones who had outstanding bands that any band member that wanted to come to Pasadena Junior College would be damned sure that all of their costs would be paid...it wasn't exactly a scholarship, it was something like "National Youth Authority." That's right, N.Y.A. There was like so much money available to deserving students to help them in their program of trying to get an education. And so he could guarantee that you would get one because he was the Dean of Men.

So anyway, now I had a problem...and this is one for the record, folks! OK, you do with what you've got. So what happened was this! I found out these kids were going to be going down to Pasadena to go to school. Well, I wanted to go to college, too. But I didn't have a prayer. But I could play the trombone. And they were all in the band.

Now there's a custom, over in places in the agricultural district of California, over in Central Valley, just like in Kansas. They have a gazebo in the central park in the small town and on Friday night, everybody comes in and they space out on the movies or the ice cream cones or whatever, and the band plays in the park, and everybody sits around and lets the air blow across them, because it's hot and you're sweaty and everybody gets off on the band music and then everybody goes home, right?

Now, these three guys, they were all, like I said, Chicano. I can't remember their names...Roy Lopez was one, I can't remember the others...anyway, they were used to playing in the gazebo. So what they said to me was this: "O.K. Grady, bring your trombone this Friday... and we'll get you in." And they did. And I sat there and I played with them. And then, I got up and I left with them.

And so then, like a number of weeks later, came time to report into Pasadena Junior College and the four of us lined up before Aubrey Strong, the Dean of Men, and he said, "You're from Selma?" "Yes, Sir!" And he accepted us all, and they didn't snitch on me. And that's how I got into college. Because my daddy got busted for being a bank robber and learned to play the trombone.

**LDW:** *Did you get along well with your father?*

**HA:** My father was always a puzzle to me. (Silence.) He had the cunning of a streetwise animal. He was a medieval knight in the wrong age. When we ran out of money, and him being a known ex-con, in Oklahoma in the thirties, there was nothing to stop him from running out, but he didn't.

One morning, we were living in this little run down shack down by the railroad yard...the reason this is standing out is that every hour on the hour a passenger or a freight train came charging along... *swish kuchuuuung*. I used to risk my life going over to pick up coals for my mother so she could put them on the stove. So one morning I got up, I was a curious kid, and my family was still in bed. So I go out onto the back porch and there's mother... If you don't shut up I'm going to throw you out [to meowing cat]...I go out onto the back porch and here's several big boxes of groceries, and there is a great, big



Hershey's chocolate bar, you know what a sweet tooth I have! Well, Joe, who was sitting in the front room with a couple of loaded German Lugers [*tape becomes unintelligible*] they had the great big clips on them, you know? I leaned right out the side of the car alongside a delivery truck and popped a few caps over the windshield and he stopped, and I stopped too...

**LDW:** *How old were you?*

**HA:** Oh, god, I was born in '18, '28, '38 (*unintelligible*). In his own way he was a very honest guy. How to get along with him I don't know because I didn't know him that well. For example, he offered to teach me all of the elements of criminal training. One night, we were sitting there in his little room...and Dad says "Come out into the garage, there's something I'd like to show you." So we went out and there's a nice Chevy Chevrolet, I think they called it, nice, and painted black. I started to touch it, you know kids, and Dad said, "No, Buck, never touch it like that, always pull your finger like this" and he showed me. In other words, if I had wanted to be a criminal, I had a perfect teacher. But I didn't want to, I wanted to go to school. Somebody was in Kansas and Dad was driving it to Texas.

**LDW:** *You didn't mention that you're a double Libra.*

**HA:** Yes, well, for those, in terms of oral history, for those who would be interested, the double Libra, sun conjunct rising sign in 26 degrees of Libra with Mercury ascendant. I have [a Grand] trine in fire signs and it goes like this: Moon in Aries 40 degrees trine Neptune in Leo at nine degrees and trine Mars [in Sagittarius] twelve degrees. I have Saturn in Leo at 25 degrees in opposition to Uranus and Aquarius 23 degrees (*unintelligible*).

**LDW:** *We left off here, you're in college.*

**HA:** My career in college was shall we say spectacular, but not very. I tried to go out for a career in engineering/physics, but I blew it when I discovered I couldn't understand differential calculus. As a consequence, I didn't quite make that.

However, in the process, because I'd been into science fiction since the mid-thirties, when I was a high school student, I had gotten involved in the local Los Angeles science fiction club. Where I was living back then. Paul Friables' habit and mine. Paul Friables was one of those genius types, he was a student of chemistry at Cal-Tech. He was to take his degree and die young because he had a bad heart. He was putting out a fan mag called *Polaris* in which some of Ray Bradbury's very earliest stories were printed.

It was his habit and mine on Friday evening, to take the big red car, the big red streetcar over from Pasadena to Los Angeles where we would transfer over to

a streetcar and we would wind up at a place called the "Cliff Cafeteria" which is about five stories tall, and as in any metropolitan area on Friday night, when everybody goes home, it was empty from the top down, which meant that the top floor was cheap for rent, and it had a room called "The Little Brown Room" with a big long conference table in it and outside the diners would sit with all these containers of bug juice...free.

And so we would line up in there around this table. And there were two chicks in the whole group...Lona and Pogo and they had a particular mission in life, to turn us all on to Esperanto because if we all spoke the same language there wouldn't be any wars. Remember, this was 1938 and War Two was just hanging over our heads...they were sure preaching the doctrine.

In any case, one evening I was sitting there and I saw this idiot running up and down on the other side of the table. Well, there were original paintings by artists for the covers of science fiction magazines on the wall and so, this guy was running up and down with a horrible Halloween rubber mask over his face trying to scare the people, especially the girls and they wondered who the hell that idiot was and he got tired of it and took his mask off and it was Ray Bradbury, he was just getting really hot at the time. It was that kind of an atmosphere.

So anyway, one night we were standing around being happily bombed and this little swirl of people comes moving through the crowd. I might add, in those days, Cory Ackerman had one of the leading collections of science fiction, this was thirty-eight, thirty-nine. Well of course you can imagine what it's like now, but in any case, it happened to be one of our particular little games to say, "Hey, everybody, let's go over to Cory's place and see his collection," and we would.

It was like this great big cavern and that was only upstairs, I don't know what he had downstairs, but we used to go on trips like that. Anyway, so I went to this founding meeting of the California Sci-Fi Society and we're standing around being happily bombed, the rooms were just full of people in and out and this little swirl of people comes moving through the crowd, and this very handsome guy...looked a lot like me in a way and what we talked about most was science fiction, magick and poetry. "What kind of poetry are you writing?" And so the next thing I know, it turned out that his name was Jack Parsons. And he said, "By the way, where do you live?"

**LDW:** *Was he already famous at that time?*

**HA:** No, he wasn't famous. Well, in the scientific community he was very well known. And in the science of rocketry he was very well known. But as far as the

general public was concerned I doubt if the general public even knew he existed. True they named a crater on the Moon after him, but the people in the general public didn't know who Jack Parsons was.

But, so, I said "Pasadena" and he said he had a private home, so that's how I wound up on Terrace Drive. And I became a part of the menage on Terrace Drive. And I discovered beautiful things like Wagner, and Debussy and music and fantastic illustrated books by Poe and Aleister Crowley and fantastically wonderful times...I always knew I'd been there.

**LDW:** *And did Jack Parsons know Crowley?*

**HA:** He never did know him. He wrote letters. He never did meet him in person. When Jack Parsons died, we were all rather shocked because we looked at him as our coming genius. We expected him to do great things. After all, he was the only member of the Order of the Temple whose name had been perpetuated by having a crater on the moon named for him. However, he did die, and the question rose as to why? Why would he have chosen to have exited this world at that particular time and that particular manner—and there was considerable speculation.

One line of speculation was that it was an accident. Another line of speculation was that it was suicide at the psychic level. Personally, I hold to the second point of view. That is to say, my personal opinion is that Jack Parsons came down, did his trip and went home. And as far as I'm concerned, it's as simple as that. So that when it comes to psychic suicide, or something like that, in other words, had he fulfilled his mission, there wasn't any point in sticking around.

Now, what was the next point?

**LDW:** *It seems like, in a way, he was the Antichrist?*

**HA:** Well, there's one way of looking at it, that Christ committed suicide. Being the son of god, he didn't have to die, but he did. Well, apparently, Jack Parsons saw something that the rest of us didn't see, and that was this: that if we were going to put an end to the reign of Christianity, you would have to have an antichrist to counterbalance the effect of Christ. Like the Star Trek episode I was mentioning earlier. In which these two guys, the only way to keep them from tearing the universe apart was to lock them in a tunnel where they will be in eternal combat...at least they won't tear this universe apart. And that's what Parsons did if I'm correct. The point is, if you didn't seal it off, it wouldn't do any good.

**LDW:** *And how was it he created Magical children?*

**HA:** Oh, through his Babalon working.



**LDW:** *In what year did he do that?*

**HA:** *(answer unintelligible.)* So, anyway, the other night at Solartron's tarot reading...we had, by the way, by count, ten Thoth decks there and I was part of a very beautiful...I had this very beautiful communication. Each person did a different reading laying out cards in their own pattern...whatever they wanted to do.

But me, I had this little treasure chest with these very unique reading cards. Thoth deck and the way I did, I took the reading from zero right on up through until I came to the Universe card and it wasn't there. And then I realized that when I had gone through picking out the major arcana that I had somehow or other mixed them. So I wondered what to do, but I needed a card to fill it, so I reached over to the deck...I wasn't playing any games or anything...I just reached over and pulled a card and it turned out to be the Prince of Cups.

Now, my birthday happens to be October 18th, which if you check your Tarot, you'll discover is the Prince of Cups. In other words, a Libra going over into Scorpio, which, in the *I Ching*, is known as "Kung Fu" or "Inner Truth" as it says in the *I Ching* it is so powerful that it moves even pigs and fishes.

**LDW:** *And so then you drew three more cards after that?*

**HA:** Oh yes, then I drew three more cards just to see what was happening, and what I found was the Eight of Wands which is like lightning invocation and in the middle there was the Universe and where it should have been in the major Atu and on the other side of that, there was the Ace of Disks which is called in the Thoth deck Aleister Crowley's 666 and it says that right in the middle. It seemed like somebody was trying to tell me something. It is on public record, printed in a couple of places that Aleister Crowley wrote the letter...he wrote several in fact, one was to me. The substance of it was that having discovered that Jack Parsons was up to creating a Moonchild and *(unintelligible)* those were the facts of these *(unintelligible)* bondages or whatever, my apologies to *(unintelligible)*. I have no idea what they're talking about yet he [Crowley] had published *Moonchild* *(unintelligible)* and all Jack Parsons was trying to do as far as I can tell was someplace put into effect was what the masters...and what you have here is a Babalon operation. This was dated 22 February, 1946.

One thing, I seem to have my elementals...[Grady here quotes from Parsons]: "She turned up on night after the conclusion of the operation...before she goes back to New York next week. She has red hair and green eyes as specified."

*Further installments will appear in future issues.*





# Hymenaeus Alpha An Oral History

(Part Three)

*Continued from the August issue*

*Do what thou wilt  
shall be the whole of the Law*

## Hymenaeus Alpha:

But anyway, that's what it was all about. So the question you asked was: What was Jack Parsons doing when he died? Well, what it came down to was this. I was privileged to see the test block...the original test block over by the Rose Bowl in Pasadena on a particular afternoon...it was '38 or '39...something like that, and he was a genius in chemistry over at Cal Tech, developing rocket fuel. Well, by the time he died, he'd gone through the fiasco with Ron Hubbard and he decided to split for Mexico, why I don't know exactly, but he was going to set up some kind of explosives plant down there I don't know whether it was a tax write-off or whatever, but he wanted to go to Mexico and that's what he decided to do. He was still married to Candy. And in the process of transferring his laboratory from the garage where it had been stored to the trailer where he was going to drive it to Mexico, he dropped a can of potassium, uh, mercury fulminate, right? And it blew him apart. The question was, "Was this intentional or not intentional?"

**LDW:** Is it true his last words were: "I can't go yet, I've too much work left to do."?

**HA:** That's what they were.

That's why we debated it for years, was this intentional or not intentional? And the ultimate conclusion...depending on who you talked to, but at least to me anyway...

**LDW:** Didn't he like to use mescaline a lot?

**HA:** We don't know whether he had mescaline. We do know that he did have pot.

**LDW:** Sometimes your astral hand can have a grip on something physical and it sucks away...

**HA:** Hhmm...I don't know. We don't know whether he had access to mescaline. But we do know he had access to pot. Because some of the people around 1003 Orange Grove said that he would get really hopped up in the morning and call into Jet Prop Lab there at Cal Tech, you know, and say that he was not feeling well and sit around being stoned all day writing poetry.

**LDW:** Did he have any physical children that he left behind?

**HA:** Not to the best of my knowledge. Uh, none...I honestly don't think so.

**LDW:** What exact date did he die?

**HA:** OK. '52

**LDW:** It must have been August? July?

*(Pause, tape cuts off)*

The way I discovered he was dead...nobody had bothered to write to me and tell me...anyway, I was in the army, I was in Korea, I had been there for almost a year. I was up there on the Eastern front near Kim Chun. One day, I had to go to the local lavatory which happened to be a shack, of course, with three holes cut in a piece of board, and the cold Korean air blowing up the crack of your ass, and I picked up this magazine called *People Today*, August 13, 1952, and the section that had to do with the death of Jack Parsons and the "L.A. Lust Cult" and, um, let me see now, this was August 15th of '52, so obviously it had to have been before then.

**LDW:** So then you find out that your best friend is dead. It must have been a bitter blow.

**HA:** Well, it was to me anyway. Call it a bit of a shock.

**LDW:** Now had you joined the Order by this time? Oh, I mean...let me digress back to when you first met Parsons and he was corresponding with Crowley and so forth at this time, how about you? When did you either join the Order or start to correspond with Crowley or...

**HA:** You are wrong about Parsons... was not corresponding with Crowley. This brings up something which might as well go on record, and that is this: It has to do with the hierarchy of the Order. For example, a lot of people think that I must have extended my regulations because in those days, nobody knew Crowley's address. Nobody knew Karl Germer's address, because of the nature of the Masonic tradition that the higher degrees are out of your reach, and you're not going to get to them. And so, therefore, it was quite a while before people discovered Germer's address. Matter of fact, it wasn't until I got to England...

**LDW:** So it was like being a Secret Chief and...

**HA:** And though Crowley was sort of like that. O.K. Fine.

**LDW:** That would be a good thing in certain ways...

**HA:** In certain ways.

**LDW:** When did you join the Order?

**HA:** I joined the Order in about 1939, at least. I can't be exactly sure of course, due to the War and everything, but in any case, it had to be '39, because I was in the Army in '40 and '41, and didn't get

to [...] until September '37. And what happened is this: after having gotten acquainted with Parsons at this party in Hollywood for the California Rocket Society...I still have four issues of the American Rocket Society Magazine from the time, which was granted because of an associate membership. I became, shall we say, well-established there. Like on weekends, it was my habit to hang out there. I have some beautiful memories of it. For example, one night... we had a habit in those days you might find interesting...at least, "nostalgic"... in those days, we weren't into plastic, you know, 33 1/3 discs. We had those old 78's, vinyl, you know, heavy as hell, and they were also vulnerable. So that, for example, they were easy to chip or wear out. So we had the latest in technology at that time which was cactus needles. You had a little thing that was sort of like a pencil sharpener only it was very small. That's right, you would put these cactus needles in this pencil sharpener and grind down the cactus needles. Yeah, that was something right out of the 1930's. Something nobody would ever believe, but it's true!

**LDW:** So you loved these afternoons you spent at Jack Parsons' and you were going to discuss how you got into the Order then when you first started meeting Crowley.

**HA:** So one day, Jack Parsons says to me "Grady, there's a guy over in Hollywood I think you'd like to meet." And I said, Yup, why don't we go in? So the next time they had a meeting on a weekend over there at Hollywood Boulevard where Agapé lodge was, ...there's Wilfred Smith as the priest, and Regina Calder. Now Wilfred Smith was a little guy and Regina Calder was a big, square gal from Texas, built sort of like a rock. And let's see, that night, Lou Carroll was doing the deacon trip. Lou Carroll well he was some kind a bit actor in Hollywood...and that's when I discovered I was a Thelemite. It was sort of funny. It came down like this: we were standing there, and we were upstairs...Regina had to welcome us. She was a teacher of "court voice" at UCLA campus in the evening. And so, anyway, she welcomed us with the sweetest smile...I understand from people who lived at the house that she could be a real virago when she wanted to. But in any case, it was a sweet smile and she welcomed us. And some guy was playing Debussy's "Sunken Cathedral" on the piano. And I'm sitting here in this booth with my two girlfriends sitting across from me. One of them is Foeie and one of them is Tommie. They're dressed identically alike. Foeie is



a big, buxom blonde chick that would later be my wife, and Tommie is a small, short chick and she also has that beautiful skin that's going to wrinkle at a very early age but in the meantime is very beautiful and really sexy, you know. And they're both dressed identical. I think this should go in a movie scenario. It was like this: see they were roommates. And they had these red jumpers over white blouses. If you can get the picture. And they were sitting there like dolls, one big and one small.

And here's this little booth over here and here's the front room and Regina standing here on the stairs opening into the living room. And then of course, up there is a temple, right, and up there is of course not the balcony, but under the eaves is a gable and that's where the altar is. And so forth.

So anyway, I got acquainted with these people and so one night...oh yeah, how I became a Thelemite. That temple was big enough so that you could have people on both sides of the altar. Of course we don't have that capability here in the current temple, but that's all we've got. Now, we did not divide up—the men sat here and the women sat there. It was just sort of like the way it came down. Anyway, we come down to the Collects. To the point where “sap of the world ash, wonder tree” where all say it together. And I looked around to people sitting on my right and on my left, and I realized “These are the people I came down to meet. These are the people I came down to find.” And that's how I became Thelemite.

Now, so, to pick up on the Jack Parsons story. So, a few months later, it was agreed that there would be an initiation at Agapé Lodge at Mulholland Boulevard and Hollywood, and for reasons that are still a mystery to me, nobody ever bothered to explain it to me, it seems that in those days they had developed, they had so edited the Minerval and First Degree initiation trips, that we did it both in one night. Which is why when I met Crowley, I'd be a First Degree in the O.T.O. Whether this is legitimate or not I don't know, but I damn sure know it was to me. Because it worked, as far as I could tell. But even to this day I remember some of the scenes from Agapé, but how I was instructed I really wouldn't know, just off hand. I mean, it would take a lot of thinking. To go from Minerval to First in one evening. So, I went through that. And Jack Parsons must have paid my dues, if anybody collected dues, because I got in. I don't even know if they collected dues. And I got my little five cent edition of *The Book of the Law* which I

promptly lost in the war. But it meant that when I got to England, I was a First Degree O.T.O. at the time I met Crowley. I don't know whether that makes any difference or not, but otherwise, I wouldn't have even known Crowley was in England for gods sakes, if I hadn't been in the O.T.O.

So anyway, I got on a troop ship and when it stopped on the river Clyde on October 18, my birthday, 1943, I went through an interminable amount of time in Liverpool and was able to score a jeep and trailer. On October 31, 1943. Went barrelling down through Bath, from Liverpool to Bath, east through Salisbury Plain just by Salisbury Cathedral, up south of Stonehenge you can't imagine how incredible it was, there was nobody there. Nobody was there. The whole god-damned plain was just empty. There was this solid cloud of you know uh, rolling east about thirty feet of the ground and it was solid lead grey, you know, about thirty miles high, you're going like that, you know. It was like being exposed to some fantastic primordial universe, you know. And rolled on in to London...and met Aleister Crowley.

**LDW:** *You were saying that usually no one had his address back in those days. How were you able to have his address?*

**HA:** As a matter of fact, come to think of it, oh, I probably, I would suppose, that I got it from Karl Germer in New York City on my way over. You see, on my way over, I stopped in New York City to meet Karl Germer. And how I got Germer's address I'm not quite sure, probably from Wilfred Smith. But the way it worked in those days was that you didn't really know of the higher degrees. If you recall it says in the *Blue Equinox* about the IX<sup>o</sup> being invisible and nobody knows who the O.H.O. is. I mean, nobody on the outside vulgar world knows who the O.H.O. is, or shouldn't because that's inner Order business. And so, I'll tell you a story which might be very illustrative. Because some of you have wondered occasionally about some of the strange practices you run into.

OK, fine. Now, once upon a time there was a very nice guy, his name was Dr. Montenegro. He was a Chicano, he was a practitioner of certain medical arts which probably wouldn't be recognized by the American Medical Association but provided for the native culture as necessary. Anyway, we called him “Brother Monte.” Now, Brother Monte was an extremely knowledgeable person, but he always seemed to come along at the wrong time. Every time he did something, it seemed like it was the wrong time to do it. And so that no matter what

happened...for example, when Dr. Montenegro or Brother Monte as we called him, had grown up as a staunch Roman Catholic in Mexico, been an altar boy and so forth. Revolted seriously, and became a high level Mason and so forth and so forth.

Now there's a name that runs around the Thelemic history of South America and that name is Krum-Heller. He is obviously of German descent with that name and yet we don't know exactly what he was up to. But we do know that every time I've run across anybody who's been initiated in South America in the Thelemic tradition the name Krum-Heller always crops up.

So anyway, in the course of events, Dr. Montenegro, who was a student of Krum-Heller's, and had taken certain degrees and so forth from Krum-Heller, found Karl Germer's address. He didn't even know Crowley's address but at least he found Germer's address. And he said to Krum-Heller, “Why didn't you tell me this?” and Krum-Heller said a lot of things to him, the substance of which was “Who in the hell are you to ask?” Now, this is the ancient Masonic tradition. Initiate orders are herent and they're inherent. If your superior tells you to do something and then if you don't do it, you're no longer in the initiate order. It's very simple, really. Who in the hell are you to ask? And that's what it comes down to, in this sort of thing.

In other words, at certain levels, you're either there or you are not. It's like Crowley explained in *Magick in Theory and Practice* in footnote: you join an initiate order, take the most fantastic oaths only to discover, in the end, that you're stuck with a bunch of you know, like idiots or whatever. How do you explain that? He said, in terms of karma. And that's what we're up against here. How was it that Brother Monte, who was really a very kind, nice guy, he just happened to come along at all the wrong times. And that's one thing we've got to watch too, in terms of our sense of timing. OK, what's the next topic?

**LDW:** *Did you get along with Germer when you met him?*

**HA:** In the early days, in the forties, I did. I got along with him very well. I met him the first time when I was on my way to Europe on a troop ship in War I, when we split from New York Harbor, that would be in October of '43 and I stopped off and I met Karl and Sasha in their apartment in New York City and we got along very well. They took me out to a Russian restaurant where I had borscht, which I thought was very far-out. You know, and so forth. I got along with



them very well and they got along very well with me.

**LDW:** *How old were they at that time?*

**HA:** I have no idea. They were from the War I generation. I mean Karl was, and certainly so was Sasha. The War I generation and the War II generations were twenty years apart. I would say they were in their forties, or their fifties, maybe.

**LDW:** *So then you sailed across and you said that you got a jeep and took off to find Crowley...*

**HA:** So the ship has got south of Stow that was of processing. And then I was shipped to Liverpool. And I spent a couple of weeks bumming around Liverpool doing this and doing that, you know, and then finally I got orders that would ship me over to East Anglia. In the meantime I had the chance to get into London. So I grabbed a jeep and trailer and threw my old trunk that's there in the office right now, and the rest of my duffle, and I headed down south to Bath, the old Roman city of Bath...all I ever saw of the Salisbury Cathedral was the spire because of the...And then there was Stonehenge like I was saying. And then I got into London that day. And met Crowley.

**LDW:** *We were speaking one time and you said that to meet Crowley you could only see in him according to what abilities you had yourself.*

**HA:** Well, the way I put it was this, what I actually said was: somebody asked me once what inspired me about Crowley. I said, well, if he could meet you at any level you were capable of meeting him. Unfortunately, I was just a big dumb kid from Oklahoma and I had to think of questions to ask him. Really. Literally. I was pretty dumb. I only have an IQ of 156. So I really had to think of things to ask him. I mean, somebody like you might just know what to ask him but...He could occupy any space you could possibly match.

My way of meeting him was one way subconscious and in another way very conscious. The subconscious part was the soldier trip. Now, Aleister Crowley admired courage. Now, after all, why did he become a mountain climber? Because he wanted to assert his courage manhood, whatever you want to call it, that spirit of aspiration that would go out and climb mountains. Remember, they didn't have jet planes in those days and they didn't have this and they didn't have that. But they did have mountains to climb, right? And so that although in his poetry he would exemplify everything, and so because of the time and so forth his record tower were maintained like in

terms of literature and poetry and his writings his stockpile, and for us, the fact that he brought down *The Book of the Law*, which of course, makes him a prophet. Now on the other hand...

Now, knowing him was at one time a pleasure, at the same time, a paradox. After all, we are but human! And, as I said, I was just a big dumb kid from Oklahoma. So, it just happened by chance that I got into OCS and wound up as a first lieutenant for reasons beyond comprehension. Maybe it was at the behest of the Secret Chiefs and this was just to prove it. But in any case, I meet Aleister Crowley there at 93 Jermyn Street in London during the war and one evening, he goes off to make tea in the kitchen and while he's out I go over to the library over under the window and discovered that book of squares...Enochian tablets. And...on another evening, I went down to write on his turntable here...and here's this book. It is *Sacred Books of the East* [Vol. XVI, *The Yi King*, trans. James Legge—Ed.], and this is the fun part. The sacred books of China takes up Confucianism—"Wooden Legge." [Laughter.] And here are his comments: "Stupid, Stupid, Stupid." But the point is this is the way that he would generate his audience.

**LDW:** *They were very strange paintings that he painted.*

[H.A. here discusses Crowley's painting on the cover of A.C.'s personal, annotated copy of the *Yi King*—this book was the property of the O.T.O. at that time although, sadly, its present whereabouts are unknown.—Ed.]

**HA:** I know. I know. That's the lesson. The object of the symposium this evening is this: I pick it up. I was looking at it like this. Then I turned it over like this I couldn't quite make it out. It's just a little too dark. In the meantime, he comes in from the kitchen with tea, and a sort of thing in his hand and brightens up... "What do you think of it?" Looking at it, I couldn't make it out, and said, "Not much." Whereupon he wagged his finger at me and explained to me that I was an ignoramus who wouldn't understand a good painting if I saw one.

**LDW:** *It's a house up on a cliff, isn't it?*

**HA:** Well, that's what I thought it was, yeah. But I was trying to figure out the significance of it, I guess I was wrong.

**LDW:** *What is it?*

**HA:** It's a house on a cliff! But you see, I didn't have time to get that trip together before he came back into the room. I was still trying to figure out what the fuck it was. But it [the book] is just priceless because it's got all his little comments, you know, about stupid, stupid, stupid or

whatever comments he made.

**LDW:** *Wonderful book. (They look at book)*

**HA:** So anyway, it wasn't the first meeting but anyway, it was during the times I would meet him. On 93 Jermyn Street in London. Now he only got really pissed at me twice. That was one time. And the other time was he and I had been playing chess and rapping for quite a while he went out into the kitchen to make tea and while he was out, of course, I was looking around his library and there was a double row of books over here under the window and in it was this square black volume that didn't have any printing on the spine. Which was somewhat unusual. So I picked it up for some compulsive reason and it was sort of like Snow White with the wicked witch with the poisoned apple trip. I knew...it was sort of a compulsive trip...I knew I had to have that particular book. I picked it up and I walked over to one of the chairs, sit down, here's the chess table here's the chair that Crowley would be sitting in, in a few minutes when he came back from the kitchen. I cracked the book, only it wasn't a book in any conventional sense. What it was, was a set of Enochian Squares...I'm sorry, Abramelin Squares...which I discovered later were charged with Enochian angels. And what in god's name they were charged for, I don't know.

But anyway, Crowley being a master magician, well anyway like I said about the compulsive trip. I had opened it and I was looking at it, and the funny thing about it was that these letters were so big they were really very big and they looked very perfect as if they had been printed. And I couldn't imagine anybody who had type that big. So what I was thinking was...golly, these things must have been painted on. And I was just about ready to touch the first letter with this finger here to see if it had been painted rather than printed when Crowley came out of the kitchen, saw me and yelled, literally yelled, "DON'T DO THAT!" I stopped, you know, a bit surprised, and he said to me, ever so quietly, "You have no idea what forces you could have unleashed."

That's what I mean about being around Aleister Crowley. On one hand, it was a blessing. On the other, you sometimes wondered. Like for example, his criticism about my poetry. For example, when I was in Normandy, I wrote a poem "Normandy in June." Then by the time we got to Chartres, I had gotten down off the adrenaline high of the invasion and I wrote a poem called "The Cynic" which was sort of a real downer trip...but Crowley liked it. He thought it brought in



some real insights. And then in the battle of northern France, in september, and so forth...this was a moving war...we were moving fast. And so I would write short fragments of poetry but when I got to Korea it was different. Because that was a static war. And it was no problem.

Knowing Crowley could be a very exasperating experience. On the one hand you could love him and on the other you didn't know what he would say next. With me, for example, like I would send him samples my poetry and he would write back and he would accept one that I felt was not really worthy of consideration and reject one that I truly liked and so forth. But he would give you reasons. And these reasons were invaluable. So in that sense, it didn't really matter whether or not your little ego was bruised the point is, you were being given instruction by probably the greatest master of the English language of the twentieth century.

The first time I saw Aleister Crowley was October 31, 1943 EV. I can be sure, because he gave me a copy of one of his poems about his Russian trip, and the date is there and his signature is there.

One of the things that sticks in my mind, it shows the human side about Crowley is it was around Christmas of 1943 of course, and it was cold and somewhat snowy, typical of an English winter, and we were sitting there one afternoon...I had gotten into town early...playing chess, smoking and so forth and rapping. There was this raucous noise at the door, and Crowley said, "I wonder what in the world that is?" And got up, walked around went over to the door. I was wondering myself what it was. I got up and stood behind him to see what it was. There were four English schoolboys you know, schoolboy size, standing outside bawling Christmas carols. And the habit in those days was, that they would sing in front of your door until you paid them. They would not go away until they were paid. Well, this time they did, because what Crowley did, he slammed the door at 93 Jermyn Street and said "To the lions with them! To the lions with them!"

That's the Aleister Crowley I knew. Just like that.

**LDW:** So you were there two or three days?

**HA:** No, no it wasn't like that at all. The way it worked was this. I was in the army I was company commander, I was a very responsible person, and I had to get on with the invasion. And I wound up in up north in the east coast of England, but once in a while, I could grab a jeep and drive into London,...you could hear the

bombs going off. And so, anyway, how long did I see Crowley? The point is I saw him only occasionally, and usually only for a few hours on a day when I could get into London or, well, of course, when he moved to Hastings which was later. Now, what would happen was, it wasn't like I would see him for days on end. For hours on end or something like that. What would happen would be that I'd grab the company jeep and drive into London, park it someplace and grab some sort of public transportation which they called the "Tube" like a subway and visit Crowley, and then I would split for the country again. So that's the way it was. And I met him in 93 Jermyn Street...I don't remember exactly how many times, but it must have been at least six times, maybe more. But at least six times. And then when he moved up to...at least once before I hit the invasion, at least once after I had survived the invasion. And then, when he moved on to Hastings, and the war was over, I was able to visit him at Hastings for a week. And that was that.

**LDW:** And how was it that he decided that he wanted you to be a representative for him when you came back to the States?

**HA:** Oh, well, that was very simple. We were sitting there in his lodgings at Netherwood one afternoon, rapping...we were rapping about many things, of course. But one thing always kept coming back into the conversation...and that was the affairs of the things in the States...which meant of course, Los Angeles which meant Agapé Lodge. And his statement was this, quote, unquote: "I may be the world's greatest magician but I have to have some information to go on." Whereupon for example, McMurtry volunteered and said: "Well, I know them and they know me...no, I said, I know them and you know me. So when I get home, I'll take a look at the situation and write you a report." And he said, fine. I designate you Sovereign Grand Inspector General of the Order. He didn't give me a document, he just said do it. And you can believe me or not believe me, it's entirely up to you. It had more to do with the history of the Order than you can believe. Because if he hadn't said that, I would have had no occasion to go back to California and find out who they thought was [...] I would have had no occasion to get the Thoth thing published, you and I wouldn't be sitting here talking.

**LDW:** OK, so he said these words to you and then did you come directly to California from England or what did you do next?

**HA:** Well, what I did next was I flew back to France and picked up my embarkation unit and had to wait thirty days before I could come home because of a New York longshoremen's strike. And came home, was flown to the West Coast, East Coast on a beat up old DC-4 and that's how I got back home. Came home to San Francisco.

**LDW:** And how was the Order when you went to see how the Order was doing in the structure and so forth.

**HA:** At that time, '45, '46, there was still an Agapé Lodge. It would survive until the period of time under...the Lodgemaster was Roy Leffingwell. And it would survive until a period of time. Then of course, in '52, as you recall, Jack Parsons was killed, and although he was a little unstable in terms of organization, certainly he had finances to keep it going. After that things went downhill steadily then they finally sort of dissolved.

**LDW:** And Germer, during this period of time, were you still getting along with him?

**HA:** OK. We're talking now about the forties or the fifties?

**LDW:** Fifty-two when Parsons died. Wait, we have to back up just a little. You had come back to see how the Order was doing. Now Agapé Lodge was still going along. Now doesn't Crowley die within a few years of this time?

**HA:** Crowley died in '47.

**LDW:** And this is '48 we're talking about?

**HA:** So what happened was this. Having been there with Crowley at Hastings and Crowley designated me as the Sovereign Inspector General of the Order, verbally, it was the only commission he gave me verbally...all of the other commissions he gave me, he gave me in writing. Anyway, so, when I came back from Europe, after War II, I stopped up to New York and again I met Karl Germer and Sasha and again, everything was very beautiful. Then I came back to California.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

## REWARD!

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